Market lowest since 1976 despite another import high

By Richard A. Wright
Assistant Managing Editor

While the imports continued to shatter monthly records, total U. S. new-car registrations were down in March to the lowest level since 1976, according to figures compiled by R. L. Polk & Co.

New-car registrations in March totaled 797,955, down 12.58 percent from 912,801 a year earlier, the record for the month. They were up, however,

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by 14.25 percent from the depressed February total of 698,413.

Of the March total, 218,012 were imports, highest ever for a February and fourth highest for any month. The import total was up 7.73 percent from 202,373 a year earlier. March was the sixth consecutive month in which registrations of new imports set a record.

However, domestic registrations of 579,943 were off 18.37 percent from 710,428 a year earlier.

For the first three months of 1980, new-car registrations totaled 2,245,673, down 7.56 percent from 2,429,295 last year.

• American Motors and General Motors increased their market shares in March compared with a year ago. AMC boosted its share of registrations 0.55 of a percentage point to 1.87 percent. GM's share was up 0.43 of a point to 45.13 percent.

Ford Motor Co. and Chrysler Corp. lost market ground in March, mainly to the imports, which boosted their share by 5.15 points to 27.32 percent.

Ford Motor Co. fell 3.54 points to 18.23 percent of March registrations, while Chrysler Corp.'s share dipped 2.58 points to 7.42 percent. The share taken by miscellaneous domestic makes dipped 0.01 of a point to 0.03 percent.

Excluding imports, domestic-

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TOP CARS

U. S. new-car registrations for the first two months of 1980. Registrations not available for Oklahoma, delayed for Kansas, Maine and Hawaii.

1980 Pos.		Make		1979 Pos.
1—	462,064	Chevrolet	483,145—	1
2—	280,441	Ford	380,063—	2
3—	193,165	Oldsmobile	216,414—	3
4—	167,448	Buick	157,751—	5
5—	154,637	Pontiac	186,667—	4
6—	146,229	Toyota	84,643—	9
7—	127,473	Datsun	82,421—	10
8—	90,792	Mercury	130,058—	6
9—	82,155	Honda	76,510—	12
10—	63,080	Dodge	95,310—	7
11—	60,201	Cadillac	81,843—	11
12—	59,487	Plymouth	86,417—	8
13—	55,623	Volkswagen	72,877—	13
14—	41,488	AMC	28,622—	16
15—	37,435	Chrysler	58,651—	14
16—	37,130	Mazda	25,301—	17
17—	28,108	Subaru	21,210—	18
18—	21,252	Lincoln	38,933—	15
19—	19,201	Fiesta	15,869—	19
20—	18,215	Arrow	—	
21—	18,089	Colt	—	
22—	12,872	Mercedes	11,679—	22
	—	Fiat	11,966—	20
	—	Volvo	11,905—	21
	68,304	Other Imports	70,051	
	784	Misc. Dom.	959	
		Total All Makes		
	2,245,673		2,429,295	

Automotive News analysis of new-car registrations based on R. L. Polk & Co. statistical report.

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NEW-CAR MARKET SHARES IN U. S.

	MARCH					THREE MONTHS				
	Regis., Mar., 1980	Percent Share of Market	Regis., Mar., 1979	Percent Share of Market	Pct. Pt. Change '80 vs. '79	Regis., 3 mos., 1980	Percent Share of Market	Regis., 3 mos., 1979	Percent Share of Market	Pct. Pt. Change '80 vs. '79
Chevrolet	161,032	20.18	177,014	19.39	+ 0.79	462,064	20.57	483,145	19.89	+ 0.68
Ford	106,110	13.30	138,533	15.18	— 1.88	280,441	12.49	380,063	15.65	— 3.16
Oldsmobile	68,648	8.60	78,137	8.56	+ 0.04	193,165	8.60	216,414	8.91	— 0.31
Buick	58,375	7.32	56,696	6.21	+ 1.11	167,448	7.46	157,751	6.49	+ 0.97
Pontiac	54,021	6.77	68,496	7.50	— 0.73	154,637	6.89	186,667	7.68	— 0.79
Mercury	33,272	4.17	47,384	5.19	— 1.02	90,792	4.04	130,058	5.35	— 1.31
Dodge	23,125	2.90	35,902	3.93	— 1.03	63,080	2.81	95,310	3.92	— 1.11
Plymouth	22,223	2.79	35,272	3.87	— 1.08	59,487	2.65	86,417	3.56	— 0.91
Cadillac	18,023	2.26	27,715	3.04	— 0.78	60,201	2.68	81,843	3.37	— 0.69
AMC	14,958	1.87	12,073	1.32	+ 0.55	41,488	1.85	28,622	1.18	+ 0.67
Chrysler	13,843	1.73	20,095	2.20	— 0.47	37,435	1.67	58,651	2.42	— 0.75
Lincoln	6,039	0.76	12,779	1.40	— 0.64	21,252	0.95	38,933	1.60	— 0.65
GENERAL MOTORS	360,099	45.13	408,058	44.70	+ 0.43	1,037,515	46.20	1,125,820	46.34	— 0.14
FORD MOTOR CO.	145,421	18.23	198,696	21.77	— 3.54	392,485	17.48	549,054	22.60	— 5.12
CHRYSLER CORP.	59,191	7.42	91,269	10.00	— 2.58	160,002	7.13	240,378	9.90	— 2.77
AMERICAN MOTORS	14,958	1.87	12,073	1.32	+ 0.55	41,488	1.85	28,622	1.18	+ 0.67
IMPORTS	218,012	27.32	202,373	22.17	+ 5.15	613,399	27.31	484,432	19.94	+ 7.37
MISCELLANEOUS	274	0.03	332	0.04	— 0.01	784	0.03	959	0.04	— 0.01
TOTAL	797,955		912,801			2,245,673		2,429,295		

Automotive News analysis of new-car registrations based on R. L. Polk & Co. statistical report. Registrations not available for Oklahoma, delayed for Kansas and Hawaii.

AUTOMOTIVE NEWS ANALYSIS OF NEW-CAR REGISTRATIONS

Based on R. L. Polk & Co. statistical report

MARCH '80 vs. MARCH '79

	1980		1979	
	MARCH	YEAR	MARCH	YEAR
AMX Spirit/AMX	5,382	14,537	3,938	9,152
Concord	4,879	12,957	5,811	13,250
Concord Station Wagon	1,421	4,034	1,406	3,590
Eagle 4 WD	1,207	3,859		
Eagle Station Wagon	1,766	5,071		
Pacer	108	324	260	782
Pacer Station Wagon	195	706	572	1,548
Matador			65	208
Matador Station Wagon			21	92
Total American Motors Corp.	14,958	41,488	12,073	28,622
Chrysler LeBaron	5,547	14,116	7,042	20,487
LeBaron Station Wagon	785	2,086	1,191	3,668
Cordoba	4,492	11,983	4,344	14,991
Newport	1,105	3,613	4,852	11,550
New Yorker	1,914	5,637	2,666	7,955
Total	13,843	37,435	20,095	58,651
Plymouth Horizon	13,331	35,998	18,958	45,003
Voyager			870	2,482
Volare	6,348	17,081	11,392	27,918
Volare Station Wagon	1,358	4,335	3,428	9,095
Fury			596	1,336
Fury Station Wagon			28	83
Gran Fury	1,186	2,073		
Total	22,223	59,487	35,272	86,417
Dodge Omni	11,011	29,277	15,161	37,159
Aspen	4,219	12,942	6,890	18,361
Aspen Station Wagon	917	3,119	2,627	7,069
Sportsman			2,618	7,768
Monaco			496	1,722
Monaco Station Wagon			21	69
Diplomat	2,684	6,391	3,285	10,098
Diplomat Station Wagon	492	1,149	526	1,693
Magnum XE/Mirada	2,474	6,636	1,893	6,581
St. Regis	1,328	3,566	2,355	4,820
Total	23,125	63,080	35,902	95,310
Total Chrysler Corp.	59,191	160,002	91,269	249,378
Ford Pinto	9,832	29,090	13,646	34,033
Pinto Station Wagon	2,806	8,534	5,393	13,680
Fairmont	25,482	61,373	21,720	56,929
Fairmont Station Wagon	7,613	18,088	7,718	20,309
Granada	5,913	19,299	13,039	37,829
Club Wagon			3,598	10,530
LTD II	436	1,547	4,138	12,788
LTD	7,978	23,966	19,401	59,256
LTD Crown Victoria	1,960	4,976		
Ford Station Wagon	2,348	7,179	4,775	14,759
Mustang	22,092	59,427	26,128	67,973
Thunderbird	19,650	46,962	18,977	51,977
Total	106,110	280,441	138,533	380,063
Lincoln Continental	2,513	8,505	6,658	19,882
Continental Mark	3,032	11,125	4,823	15,133
Versailles	494	1,622	1,298	3,918
Total	6,039	21,252	12,779	38,933
Mercury Bobcat	2,257	6,732	3,741	9,050
Bobcat Station Wagon	524	1,522	963	2,446
Zephyr	7,684	19,180	7,125	19,447
Zephyr Station Wagon	1,743	4,247	1,715	4,677
Monarch	2,287	7,619	5,328	14,577
Marquis	1,057	3,539	2,488	6,921
Marquis Brougham	1,035	3,341	2,275	6,282
Grand Marquis	1,773	5,130	2,799	8,354
Marquis Station Wagon	740	2,152	1,289	3,873
Cougar/XR7	8,043	20,715	11,501	33,581
Capri	6,129	16,615	8,160	20,850
Total	33,272	90,792	47,384	130,058
Lincoln-Mercury Division	39,311	112,044	60,163	168,991
Total Ford Motor Co.	145,421	392,485	198,696	549,054
Buick Skyhawk	856	2,683	1,537	3,924
Skylark	14,395	40,084	4,347	12,486
Century	10,344	26,859	2,166	6,427
Regal	15,088	43,876	21,563	58,005
Century Station Wagon	1,415	4,062	2,274	6,282
LeSabre	2,355	6,373	2,698	7,173
LeSabre Limited	4,843	14,675	7,946	22,766
Electra 225	4,699	15,534	7,765	23,234
Buick Station Wagon	1,101	3,014	1,446	4,259
Riviera	3,279	10,288	4,954	13,195
Total	58,375	167,448	56,696	157,751
Cadillac deVille	8,108	28,576	14,702	44,095
Fleetwood & Chassis	2,510	8,323	3,338	9,943
Eldorado	4,139	12,508	5,743	15,540
Seville	3,266	10,794	3,932	12,265
Total	18,023	60,201	27,715	81,843
Chevrolet Chevette	38,481	102,280	31,639	76,490
Camaro	10,324	31,021	20,595	57,271
Monza	12,655	34,054	12,791	31,691
Monza Station Wagon	52	254	2,110	5,448
Citation	32,402	93,061	10,799	34,053
Sportvan			2,821	7,800
Malibu	16,485	46,544	21,521	59,305
Malibu Station Wagon	5,620	15,784	8,541	23,106
Monte Carlo	13,563	41,578	23,205	62,651
Impala	8,754	27,352	13,982	40,314
Caprice	12,938	41,501	16,892	50,595
Chevrolet Station Wagon	6,663	20,032	8,487	24,871
Corvette	3,095	8,603	3,631	9,550
Total	161,032	462,064	177,014	483,145
Oldsmobile Starfire	931	3,096	1,904	4,643
Omega	7,414	18,787	2,058	6,113
Cutlass Salon	15,438	39,537	4,155	11,774
Cutlass Supreme/Calais	20,493	59,535	33,068	91,032
Cutlass Station Wagon	2,463	7,317	3,629	10,452
Delta 88	1,842	5,090	3,196	8,518
Delta 88 Royale	9,488	27,651	15,093	40,465
98	5,644	17,030	7,924	24,350
Oldsmobile Station Wagon	1,818	5,565	2,491	6,893
Toronado	3,117	9,557	4,619	12,174
Total	68,648	193,165	78,137	216,414
Pontiac Sunbird	12,109	28,551	8,360	20,041
Sunbird Station Wagon	9	39	380	1,062
Phoenix	8,102	22,445	3,710	9,845
LeMans	4,853	14,458	7,388	20,469
LeMans Station Wagon	2,159	6,734	3,255	8,025
Catalina	1,328	4,032	2,279	6,643
Bonneville	3,924	12,319	6,926	19,719
Bonneville Brougham	3,291	9,987	3,226	9,616
Pontiac Station Wagon	1,179	3,945	2,120	6,123
Grand Prix	9,303	28,941	15,275	43,169
Firebird	7,764	23,186	15,577	41,955
Total	54,021	154,637	68,496	186,667
Total General Motors	360,099	1,037,515	408,058	1,125,820
(Checker)	243	688	308	880
Miscellaneous Domestic Total	274	784	332	959
Domestic Station Wagon Total	45,187	128,968	76,343	211,752
Domestic Grand Total	579,943	1,632,274	710,428	1,944,863
Import Total	218,012	613,399	202,373	484,432
Grand Total All Registrations	797,955	2,245,673	912,801	2,429,295

Registrations not available for Oklahoma.

Model breakdown

Auction averages

	May	April	March
1980	$6,050	$6,322	$6,799
1979	4,610	4,940	5,108
1978	3,498	3,441	3,533
1977	2,578	2,642	2,691
1976	2,177	2,052	2,069
1975	1,662	1,737	1,769
1974	1,203	1,234	1,375
1973	1,007	1,037	991
OVERALL AVERAGE	$3,183	$3,102	$3,112

Used car sales

Auction averages

May	$3,183
Month ago	$3,178
Year ago	$3,023

All plants work, but downtime is resuming

Car production rises in short week

For the first time this year all U. S. car assembly plants were operating last week which pushed the holiday-shortened period above the previous week's production.

Planned output for last week's four-day build was 126,739, up 4.83 percent from the 120,895 the previous week but a drop of 29.94 percent from the 180,892 completed in the year-ago week. Last week's production period was shortened by the Memorial Day holiday and all plants had Monday (May 26) off.

Although all plants were operating last week, considerable downtime is scheduled for this week.

Chrysler Corp. will close its Newark (Del.) plant today (June 2) to begin conversion to production of the new K-cars, the Reliant and Aries. The plant, which currently assembles the Volare and Aspen, will resume operations in mid-August. The move will idle 3,500 hourly workers.

The company's Lynch Rd. plant will be down for one week beginning today to balance inventories. That operation will be mothballed at the end of the 1980 model year.

Ford will close its Atlanta, St. Louis, Mahwah and San Jose plants for one week; the Lorain and Louisville plants for two weeks, and Wixom for three weeks beginning today (June 2).

General Motors will also have plants closed this week, but the specific operations affected had not been announced at press-time.

The biggest increase in output last week came from Ford which jumped 27.46 percent to 31,950 from the previous week's 25,066. Although last week was short, the company had six plants down the previous week, accounting for the low build.

General Motors also showed an increase, up 4.35 percent from 71,656 to 74,776 as it resumed operations at six points.

Saturday overtime has been scheduled at two GM plants, Lordstown and Willow Run.

Year-to-date the auto makers have built 2,902,834 cars, off 29.29 percent from the 4,051,137 completed in the comparable 1979 period.

Breakdown for the year through May 31 was: GM, 64.38 percent; Ford 19.99 percent; Chrysler, 9.94 percent; Volkswagen of America, 2.97 percent; American Motors, 2.67 percent, and Checker 0.05 percent.

Truck production increases as Ford, GM reopen plants

U. S. truck production last week jumped above the previous week's level as General Motors and Ford reopened plants.

Although last week's production period was shortened by the Memorial Day holiday, output was up 23.46 percent to 25,700 from the previous week's 20,817 but off 60.95 percent from the 65,821 built in the year-ago week.

GM reopened five plants last week after one to two weeks of downtime, while Ford reopened two.

All GM, Volkswagen of America and Chrysler plants worked last week, but downtime was reported at Ford and American Motors.

Ford will close its Kansas City, Louisville, Lorain and Ohio truck plants for two weeks beginning today (June 2).

In addition, the company said its Norfolk and Twin Cities (St. Paul) plants will remain down until June 16. The plants had been slated to resume operations today and have been closed since May 19.

As previously announced, the Michigan Truck facility in Wayne will be closed until June 16.

AMC's Jeep plant in Toledo was closed last week but will reopen today. The plant has been down four weeks.

Chrysler will call back about 1,150 hourly workers and 100 salaried employes at its Warren truck plant as it adds a second shift and increases the daily rate. The daily rate will be increased from 424 to 640 units a day beginning today.

Chrysler said this is the second phase of shifting truck production to Warren truck from the Jefferson Ave. plant which is currently undergoing a $100-million conversion from trucks to production of the new Reliant and Aries.

Freightliner has laid off 124 workers at its parts facility in Portland, Ore., "to achieve better balance between parts manufacturing and truck building schedules."

The company will also close its U. S. assembly and parts plants for two weeks beginning June 9 to balance inventories.

Mack Truck has laid off 380 workers at its Hayward (Calif.) plant because of declining sales of its heavy diesel truck tractors.

Production at the company's Allentown, Macungie and Hagerstown plants will be cut from 136 diesel units a day to 92 beginning today. Production at Hayward will drop from 22 to 14.

U. S. CAR PRODUCTION

	Week Ended May 31, 1980	Same Week 1979	Week Ended May 24, 1980	May Estimate	Jan. 1, to June 2, 1979	Jan. 1, to May 31, 1980
AMERICAN MOTORS	2,978*	4,500*	2,978*	10,126	55,978	77,453
Eagle	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....
Concord	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....
'78 AMX	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....
Pacer	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....
Spirit	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....
CHRYSLER CORP.	13,450	21,746	16,924	69,597	420,547	288,513
Plymouth Total	6,400	9,116	7,765	31,602	168,780	132,485
Horizon	2,700	2,853	3,340	14,060	73,750	68,978
Volare	2,700	5,959	3,322	13,047	91,419	49,439
'80 Gran Fury	600	.....	742	2,831	.....	10,731
Caravelle	400	304	361	1,664	3,611	3,337
Chrysler Total	1,800	4,872	2,493	9,801	87,649	37,635
Chrysler	300	2,014	487	1,726	37,834	8,858
LeBaron	1,500	2,858	2,006	8,075	49,815	28,777
Dodge Total	5,250	7,758	6,666	28,194	164,118	118,393
Omni	2,200	2,587	2,708	11,576	65,829	60,673
St. Regis	400	641	402	2,249	13,802	8,561
Diplomat	750	847	1,168	4,658	23,593	13,674
Aspen	1,900	3,683	2,388	9,711	60,894	35,485
FORD MOTOR	31,950	47,116	25,066	106,820	1,068,525	580,343
Ford Division	23,930	31,480	19,439	79,759	675,047	423,915
Pinto	2,928	3,715	3,334	10,935	80,951	44,860
Mustang II/Mustang	4,386	7,042	5,998	21,086	169,216	115,844
Fairmont	5,073	4,963	6,933	27,822	81,006	122,356
Granada	2,721	3,496	3,174	9,126	74,409	35,410
LTD II	.....	794	.....	.....	20,374	.....
Thunderbird	5,878	6,419	.....	5,878	151,091	64,195
Ford	2,944	5,051	.....	4,912	98,000	41,250
L-M Division	8,020	16,636	5,627	27,061	393,478	156,428
Mercury Total	6,969	12,486	5,627	24,309	300,296	140,552
Bobcat	272	1,117	639	1,855	21,717	9,187
Capri	1,695	2,170	1,698	6,846	50,036	34,019
Zephyr	1,871	1,627	1,664	8,441	30,998	39,733
Monarch	1,119	1,437	1,626	3,896	38,621	11,689
Cougar/XR7	988	3,612	.....	988	94,532	21,966
Mercury	1,024	2,523	.....	2,283	64,392	23,938
Lincoln Total	1,051	3,150	.....	2,752	93,182	15,896
Lincoln	495	1,595	.....	1,079	46,499	5,905
Versailles	.....	119	.....	418	8,690	1,861
Mark VI	556	1,436	.....	1,255	37,993	8,130
GENERAL MOTORS	74,776	104,053	71,656	322,603	2,488,951	1,868,899
Buick Division	14,670	15,530	16,545	66,845	370,837	371,805
Skyhawk	.....	397	.....	.....	10,669	.....
Skylark/'79-'80	3,833	2,548	4,079	19,004	28,163	99,537
Century	3,248	1,102	3,856	17,162	24,469	81,634
Regal	3,888	5,388	5,062	19,297	129,063	96,937
Buick	2,777	4,821	3,548	7,715	146,927	71,695
Riviera	924	1,274	.....	3,667	31,546	22,002
Cadillac Division	3,079	6,928	1,854	11,814	194,971	95,838
Seville	342	829	.....	1,863	24,908	17,067
Cadillac	1,719	4,557	1,854	6,378	129,372	54,261
Eldorado	1,018	1,542	.....	3,573	40,601	24,510
Chevrolet Division	29,130	43,661	30,688	142,353	1,049,262	781,712
Chevette	6,940	8,627	8,837	37,985	168,528	195,551
Monza	4,000	2,743	4,084	17,485	67,161	73,526
Camaro	2,130	5,627	2,759	10,118	133,031	58,503
Nova/Citation	7,300	6,517	10,417	41,746	89,318	206,169
Malibu	5,020	7,043	2,842	21,151	189,078	118,370
Monte Carlo	1,180	3,328	950	5,293	122,154	51,380
Chevrolet	1,920	8,986	.....	5,222	259,143	58,679
Corvette	640	790	799	3,353	20,849	19,534
Oldsmobile Division	15,922	22,696	13,556	59,859	514,455	360,213
Starfire	.....	354	.....	.....	9,200	.....
Omega/'79-'80	2,184	1,024	2,181	10,480	13,803	52,932
Cutlass	8,238	11,316	5,299	33,241	251,673	175,711
Oldsmobile	4,840	8,874	6,076	13,472	209,036	112,744
Toronado	660	1,128	.....	2,666	30,743	18,826
Pontiac Division	11,975	15,238	9,013	41,732	359,426	259,331
Acadian†	645	377	659	3,057	9,050	11,907
Sunbird	3,120	1,838	3,146	13,446	43,656	65,709
Phoenix/'79-'80	2,190	1,724	2,811	12,792	25,556	59,683
Firebird	1,136	4,231	1,245	4,766	99,750	38,893
LeMans	1,769	1,710	672	3,948	46,370	25,096
Grand Prix	1,396	2,116	.....	1,396	47,697	25,364
Pontiac	1,716	3,242	480	2,327	87,347	32,679
VOLKSWAGEN	3,500	3,382	4,183	17,872	69,162	86,204
CHECKER	85	95	88	346	1,974	1,422
Total Cars, N. S.	126,739	180,892	120,895	527,364	4,105,137	2,902,834

CANADIAN CAR PRODUCTION

	Week Ended May 31, 1980	Same Week 1979	Week Ended May 24, 1980	May Estimate	Jan. 1, to June 2, 1979	Jan. 1, to May 31, 1980
CHRYSLER CORP.	1,728	3,446	.....	4,876	61,996	27,877
FORD MOTOR	6,889	8,499	5,679	27,983	149,260	112,863
GENERAL MOTORS	4,608	13,209	9,819	41,680	270,649	231,872
VOLVO	225	180	180	945	3,848	4,780
Total Cars, Canada	13,450	25,334	15,678	75,484	485,753	377,392
N. American Cars	140,189	206,226	136,573	602,848	4,590,890	3,280,226
N. American Trucks	32,779	84,106	30,697	156,920	2,029,599	977,653
North American Cars and Trucks	172,968	290,332	167,270	759,768	6,620,489	4,257,879

†—All Acadians and Caravelles are built for sale in Canada. *—Estimated.

TRUCK PRODUCTION IN U. S.†

	Week Ended May 31, 1980	Same Week 1979	Week Ended May 24, 1980	May Estimate	Jan. 1, to June 2, 1979	Jan. 1, to May 31, 1980
CHEVROLET	6,616	21,113	3,076	26,323	526,619	231,047
DODGE/PLYMOUTH	3,100	6,537	3,524	15,615	213,943	65,026
FORD	7,385	23,116	6,741	33,182	600,468	266,312
GMC	4,349	7,109	2,350	15,156	157,296	75,783
INTERNATIONAL	1,988	2,584	2,774	11,258	64,936	14,075
MACK	450	748	418	1,982	16,309	11,658
WHITE	128	204	158	653	5,747	3,351
JEEP	.....	3,300*	.....	672*	78,988	35,833*
AM CORP.	284*	360*	284*	1,250*	9,982	3,854*
VOLKSWAGEN	500	.....	592	2,527	.....	12,162
MISCELLANEOUS	900	750	900	3,960	18,730	18,660
Total Trucks, U. S.	25,700	65,821	20,817	112,578	1,693,018	737,761

CANADIAN TRUCK PRODUCTION

	Week Ended May 31, 1980	Same Week 1979	Week Ended May 24, 1980	May Estimate	Jan. 1, to June 2, 1979	Jan. 1, to May 31, 1980
CHRYSLER CORP.	1,040	1,793	843	4,422	34,582	17,302
FORD MOTOR	3,912	7,296	3,182	16,411	124,549	84,357
GENERAL MOTORS	726	7,304	4,689	18,724	136,794	117,568
AMERICAN MOTORS	856	1,219	714	2,464	27,782	11,841
INTERNATIONAL	440	479	354	1,859	9,477	5,313
MACK	40	96	33	174	1,602	1,130
WHITE	65	98	65	288	1,795	1,381
Total Trucks, Canada	7,079	18,285	9,880	44,342	336,581	239,892
N. American Trucks	32,779	84,106	30,697	156,920	2,029,599	977,653

**—Revised. †—Now includes van production.
Jeep includes commercial vehicles only. AM General includes government-destined vehicles.

Canadian cars drop for week; trucks off, too

Canadian car and truck production continued to fall last week as output declined from both year-ago and week-ago figures.

Planned auto production last week was 13,450, down 14.21 percent from the 15,678 built the previous week and 46.91 percent from the 25,334 assembled the week ended June 2, 1979.

Truck output slated for last week was 7,079, down 28.35 percent from the 9,880 built the previous week and 61.29 percent from the 18,285 completed in the year-ago week.

American Motors' Jeep plant in Brampton will close today (June 2) for conversion to cars. The plant will resume operations in mid-October.

General Motors' Oshawa car and truck plant was scheduled to reopen today after one week's downtime. The Scarborough van plant remains down for another two weeks.

Year-to-date car production was 377,392, down 22.31 percent from the 485,753 assembled the week ended June 2, 1979.

So far this year, the truck makers have completed 239,892 vehicles, down 28.73 percent from the 336,581 built in the year-ago period.

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Automotive News

Detroit, June 9, 1980

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States woo Nissan as firm hunts U.S. plant site

By Robert W. Irvin
Editor-at-Large

TOKYO.—Ohio is apparently among only three or four states still in the running for the plant Nissan Motor Co. will construct to build Datsun pickup trucks in the U. S.

That was the indication the other day from Nissan officials who said they will decide on the site for the plant in late July.

Michigan is not in the running because it is the home base for the U. S. auto industry and its union. Under these circumstances, Nissan officials don't think it would be appropriate to locate there.

Nissan officials have also been offered but are ruling out the Ford car assembly plant in Mahwah, N. J., and the Chrysler truck plant in St. Louis. Both factories have been ordered permanently closed.

Nissan officials do not want to modify an existing building, such as Volkswagen elected to do when it selected facilities in New Stanton, Pa., and Sterling Heights, Mich., for its assembly plants.

Instead, Nissan is looking for a vacant 500-acre site it could use to build a plant from scratch. Asked what kind of location they would like, Nissan officials pointed to Honda, another Japanese firm which has a motorcycle plant in Marysville, O., and is going to expand it to build cars.

The Nissan officials see a lot of merit in locating not in an urban area but in a small town, where the plant could soon become an important part of the community.

Nissan wants a large site so it will have the option of expanding the plant so it can be used to make vans, four wheel drive utility vehicles or even cars.

Everyone, it seems, has just the place to build Datsuns. The firm has been wooed by people from most of the states. The Nissan officials have said they are interested in either the Southeast or the Midwest.

They would prefer a location where the small Japanese pickup trucks are popular and also a site in an area where there are many automotive supplier firms.

While such trucks are popular on the West Coast—as are import cars—this area is ruled out because it is not a center for automotive suppliers. That is why the Midwest has to be a prime location.

Not surprisingly, the Great Lakes region has been actively pursuing Nissan.

Mitsuya Goto, deputy general manager for the international division of Nissan, said of all the

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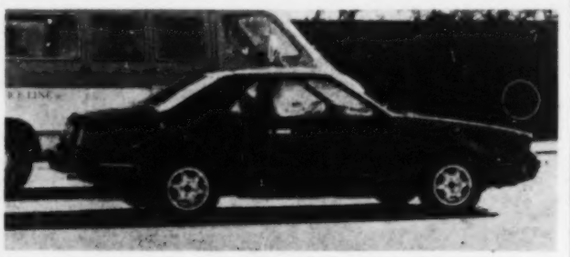
Move over, Mustang!

Jim Piegue

Sporty Ford subcompacts due in mid-1981

Ford Motor will field Ford and Mercury versions of this new subcompact coupe as midyear additions to the Escort and Lynx lines, which debut this fall. The front-drive coupes, which sources say will be called the Ford EXP and Mercury LN-7, will be offered in the regular notched hatchback version shown here, as well as a glass hatchback model.



GM rules out option for 1982

New hassle on air bags

By Helen Kahn
Washington Bureau Chief

WASHINGTON. — General Motors' decision not to offer air bags as an option on its full-size 1982 models drew strong and immediate criticism from air-bag proponents.

GM will meet the passive-restraint standard with automatic belts for front-seat protection. There will be no full-width bench seats on its 1982 big cars since there must be a channel between the seats for the retractors. This means no three-passenger front seats.

The passive-restraint standard begins its three-year phase-in on '82 models on cars with a wheelbase of 114 inches or more.

GM said it will offer the air-bag option for some '83 models, but it was not specific on whether these would be full-size, mid-size or both.

The phone call on the decision from GM President Elliott M. Estes to Deputy Transportation Secretary William Beckham followed a GM board meeting and was based on future product development—the '82 large models will last only a year before downsizing.

The '83 models — large and mid-size—will, of course, have automatic belts to meet the requirements of Standard 208, with air bags optional on some.

The postponement of the air-bag option by GM immediately created great disappointment in public interest circles and especially from NHTSA Chief Joan Claybrook.

She said GM was "abandoning its technological leadership" and noted that the first company likely to offer air bags in the U. S. market was Mercedes-Benz which will make them standard equipment on all the '82 models it will offer for sale in the U. S.

Claybrook even suggested that Mercedes might be followed by other German and Japanese companies "who are already out-competing our U. S. companies in offering products the public needs and desires."

But Mercedes, with its total U. S. sales of 50,000 to 60,000 cars, and the still-current Ford plan to offer the air bag as an option on its "luxury" '82½ models will be peanuts in the total market.

Safety experts were counting on GM's millions to offer a comparison between fleets of cars with passive belts and those with air-cushion restraints.

• Besides, although Ford had a limited program of passenger front-seat air bags for fleet testing, GM was always the leader because it actually put air bags on production cars although it sold only 10,000 of them in 1974 models. In 1977, GM said it would need four to six years leadtime to tool cars economically for air bags.

GM and others had committed themselves to former DOT Secretary William T. Coleman's program for fleet testing, and when that action was overturned by former Secretary Brock Adams (Coleman's successor) on grounds that it was illegal (making public acceptance the criterion rather than safety needs), GM said it would offer optional air bags on '81 full-size cars—a year before the mandate for some kind of passive protection.

But in 1979, GM expressed concern about possible problems with the out-of-position child and then decided it had solved those problems and would offer the air-bag option on '82 models.

Claybrook said: "We wonder how much longer GM will continue to hold air bags hostage, particularly in view of the findings of its own market research showing consumer interest in purchasing air bags costing up to $360." (This reference was to documents released by Rep. John L. Burton, California Democrat).

"By limiting consumer choice," Claybrook continued, "its action thwarts the American government's program to ensure that the American public will have safer cars even as fuel-economy demands cause us to use smaller and lighter cars—cars that have

Continued on Page 41, Col. 1

From GM on Sept. 25 to Ford on Oct. 17

'81-model debuts to be spread out

By Joseph Bohn
Marketing Editor

New-model introductions for the domestic auto makers this fall will run from late September to mid-October.

Ford Motor Co. has "tentatively" set back its public introductions to Oct. 17, according to a spokesman. Slow sales and the desire to give dealers extra time to clear out the anticipated backlog of '80s is the main reason.

Ford stands to save itself millions of dollars on carryover allowance by giving its dealers extra time to clear out '80s. Additionally, a small carryover stock is considered important to getting a quick, smooth launch for new models like Escort and Lynx and Monarch and Cougar.

Chrysler Corp. is still looking at an Oct. 12 introduction for its '81s, including Aries and Reliant. Chrysler has been paring production schedules to get the lowest carryover level since the 1960s. Like Ford, it needs a thin carryover to help get its new models off to a fast start.

General Motors is going with a Sept. 25 introduction. GM has no major new product introductions this fall. Its J-cars won't be out until spring.

American Motors is still undecided about an introduction date. The company had wanted to introduce early, but rising inventories are forcing it to reconsider.

All public introductions are still fluid and depend to some degree on how sales unfold in the coming weeks.

Even at Datsun, one insider observed that no date had been nailed down.

"We could go as early as Sept. 1 or as late as Oct. 10," depending on the sales and inventory situation, he said.

Datsun has experienced some buildup of 280-ZX sports-car models, but has shrugged off a good deal of the recessionary effects so far.

breaking news

Japanese jackpot

TOKYO. — Japanese auto production established a record in April, cracking the previous high attained only one month earlier. Including knockdown export units, the total was 1,001,323—the first time the Japanese have topped a million in one month.

German sales dip

BONN, West Germany. — A slump in the German car market has seen Opel sales in the first four months drop to 162,000 from over 200,000 a year ago. German-built Fords fell to 97,000 from 128,000 and Volkswagen-Audi declined 7.2 percent to 309,000. Mercedes-Benz, still trying to catch up with orders, rose fractionally to 89,300.

Conflict on R&T

WASHINGTON. — A conflict between two House committees on auto research and technology is expected to be

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Service Index climbs after reaching bottom

By Francis J. Gawronski
Service Editor

After skidding to its lowest level in the history of the Automotive News Service Index in March, service and parts business in new-car dealerships bounced back in April to top the volume recorded in the same month the year before for only the second time in 1980.

According to the Service Index, service and parts business in April amounted to 101.8 percent of the volume done in April, 1979. April's showing was the best of the year. In March, service and parts business dipped to 86.9 percent of the year-earlier volume.

SERVICE INDEX
101.8

	April, '80 vs. April, '79	4 mos., '80 vs. 4 mos., '79
Gross Profit on All Labor and P&A Sales	+ 7.3%	—
Repair Orders Written	— 3.2%	—13.3%
Total Labor Sales (Customer & Warranty)	+ 3.9%	+ 1.8%
Shop Parts Sales (Customer & Warranty)	+ 1.5%	— 2.2%
Sales of All P&A	+ 0.5%	— 2.8%

"—Survey by Automotive News shows that dealers' service and parts business in April, 1980, was 101.8 percent of business in April, 1979. Service business in the four months of 1980 was 95.4 percent of business in the corresponding period in 1979.

Four of the five indicators used in the Service Index recorded gains in April. Repair orders written failed to show a gain, slipping 3.2 percent.

The indicator showing the biggest gain in April was gross profit on all labor, parts and accessory sales, the most important indicator from the dealers' point of view. Profit in April was up 7.3 percent. In March, it was down 10.3 percent.

Total labor sales — customer-paid and warranty—were up 3.9 percent from the year-ago figure, while April's shop parts sales (those used in the dealer's shop on customer-paid and warranty jobs) climbed 1.5 percent.

April sales of all parts and accessories increased slightly—0.5 percent—over the volume recorded in the same month of 1979.

Figures used in the Service Index are averages compiled from reports on shop operations from a cross-section of the nation's new-car dealers.

For the first four months of 1980, shop business amounted to 95.4 percent of the business done in the same period a year ago.

The leading indicator for the period was labor sales, up 1.8 percent, while gross profit remained the same as the year-ago figure.

Repair orders written were down 13.3 percent, while sales of all parts and accessories declined 2.8 percent for the period. Shop parts sales dipped 2.2 percent.